



NEWS RELEASE

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SBDCs Help Minority Businesses Obtain SBA Financing In Spanish

SMALL OFFICE AND HOME OFFICE BUSINESSES ACCESSING SBA LOANS

Los Angeles area entrepreneurs are finding a way to "open for business" with the help of small SBA loans, underwritten by a unique program spearheaded by Innovative Bank (IB). This plucky little financial institution recently acquired the Bank of Oakland and then proceeded to carve out a niche in the \$5,000 SBA Loan marketplace, using Nevada as a testing ground. Now IB has entered Los Angeles and in a dramatic fashion and is focused on Minority Business Enterprise and its limitless number of *small office home office* based businesses. Thus, evolved the acronym for IB's product ---SOHO. Recently, IB has increased its lending policy and has added \$10,000 and \$15,000 loans to its lending arsenal to satisfy a growing demand for micro-business working capital.

IB's novel program employs community intermediaries to host loan application workshops, during which the application is completed. The intermediary also reviews poignant information that may accompany the application. Usually within a week to 10 days of receipt of the application by the bank, the intermediary will be able to apprise the applicant of acceptance or whether additional work is necessary to proceed. Loan funding often follows several days after approval by the bank and acceptance by the prospective borrower.

Los Angeles SBA Director Alberto G. Alvarado welcomes the advent of this SOHO SBA loan product as an economic development tool for his tri-county service area. "Innovative Bank has devised an approach which has allowed loan aspirants to "get into business" with little or virtually no cash outlay. It is a true 'open door policy' for which we are grateful to the bank,"mused Director Alvarado.

The North LA SBDC, hosted by Valley Economic Development Center, is one of the inaugural intermediaries and has within the last three months generated more than four dozen of these SOHO loans. The strongest contributor to this SBDC's small loan production success is Marlen Bello, a Business Development Officer (BDO) for North LA SBDC.

As a BDO, Marlen consults with small businesses in need of technical assistance, marketing and business planning, and, in particular, access to capital. She also adds additional value to her consulting repertoire by virtue of the fact that she is fluent in Spanish. This language ability has led to her uniquely and successfully disseminating the message of the SBA's Loan Programs throughout the Latino small business community in Spanish. Since joining the program, Marlen has hosted and been a facilitator at numerous Spanish and English language loan workshops. These workshops have remarkably attracted an average attendance level of 20 small business owners. As a result of these capital access sessions, more than 100 loans packages were generated for the bank.

Gamaliel "G" Padilla, a Spanish speaking intermediary from the Southwest Los Angeles SBDC, also hosts Spanish language small SBA Loan workshops. However, unlike Marlen Bello, G prefers to meet one-on-one with Spanish speaking entrepreneurs to process their loans. Mr. Padilla a fanatical baseball fan whimsically defers to Ms. Bello's prowess and leadership in small loan production, respectfully referring to her as the Babe Ruth of micro lending, stating with humor and camaraderie, "Marlen has been lighting up the scoreboard".

Marlen's first assignment had her broadly covering the greater LA County area. As part of her functional responsibilities, she would often assist Spanish speaking SBA Economic Development Outreach Specialists, Juan Urbina and Fernando Olivares by inviting their referrals to her workshops. Both men were pleased with Marlen's professionalism, responsiveness, and productivity. Recently, she transferred to North LA SBDC's Pacoima Office to focus on that municipality's Latino and Latina small business community, which is experiencing dramatic growth and in need of working capital. Since her arrival, Marlen has already booked 5 loans with many more in the pipeline.

District Director Alvarado expressed pride in Ms. Bello's achievements stating, "Marlen Bello has worked this small office home office loan program to successfully access capital for her constituent micro businesses. I hope every SOHO business in Pacoima reads this article and considers registering for one of her workshops"

For information on SBA loan workshops offered by Marlen Bello, please call her at the Pacoima Office (818) 834-9860. G Padilla can be reached at (310) 973-3157

To find out more about SBA Loan Programs and Services visit the Agency's user friendly web site www.sba.gov or call one of the following Economic Development Specialists at the SBA's Los Angeles District Office:

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